

DOCUMENTS AND MATERIALS RELATING TO THE EVE OF THE SECOND WORLD WAR

November 1937-1938

LIST OF DOCUMENTS:

Conversation Between Hitler and Halifax, November 19, 1937 . . .	1
Conversation Between Hitler and Henderson, March 3, 1938 . . .	8
Report of the Polish Ambassador in Paris Lukasiewicz of a Conversation with the French Foreign Minister Bonnet, May 27, 1938	13
Report of the German Ambassador in London von Dirksen to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, July 10, 1938	17
Communication of the German Delegation in Munich to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on the Course of the Munich Conference, September 29, 1938	21
Text of Munich Agreement, September 29, 1938	24
Kordt's Notes on the Munich Conference, September 29, 1938 . .	25
A Czechoslovak Foreign Ministry Record of the Czechoslovak Delegation's Visit to Munich, September 30, 1938	27
Anglo-German Declaration, September 30, 1938	29
Franco-German Declaration, December 6, 1938	29
Letter from the Polish Ambassador in London Raczynski to the Polish Ambassador in Berlin Lipski, December 19, 1938 . . .	30

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NO. 206

SUPPLEMENT TO "NEW TIMES" No. 16, APRIL 14, 1948

"NEW TIMES" NOTE

A collection of documents has just appeared in Moscow published by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the U.S.S.R. and entitled: "Documents and Materials Relating to the Eve of the Second World War. Vol. I. November 1937-1938. From the Archives of the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs."

The preface to the collection states:

"In the early part of 1948 the State Department of the U.S.A. published a collection of reports and records of Hitlerite diplomatic officials under the title "Nazi-Soviet Relations, 1939-1941." One learns from the preface to this collection that in the summer of 1946 an agreement to publish German diplomatic documents was reached between the Governments of the U.S.A. and Great Britain, to which France subsequently adhered. In 1945 the Soviet Government had addressed the British Government proposing a joint study of the German documents and insisted that Soviet experts be allowed to participate. The Soviet Government's proposal was rejected. The American, British and French Governments undertook a separate publication of German documents, without the participation of the Soviet Union. In view of this, the Soviet Government feels entitled

to make public the secret documents from the Archives of the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs captured by the Soviet Army on its triumphant entry into Berlin."

The documents included in the first volume of this publication relate to the period from November 1937 to December 1938. They comprise records of conversations of Hitler, Ribbentrop and other representatives of the German Government with foreign statesmen, reports of German foreign diplomatic representatives, and documents relating to the negotiations of the German Government with other governments, as well as documents of other governments having a direct bearing on the materials from the Archives of the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs contained in the collection.

The documents are arranged in chronological order. Where the translation is not from the German, but from some other language, this is indicated by footnotes. The collection was prepared for the press by the Archives Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the U.S.S.R.

This supplement to *NEW TIMES*, No. 16, April 14, 1948, contains eleven of the documents included in the published collection.

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CONVERSATION BETWEEN HITLER AND HALIFAX¹

REICHSBANKPRÄSIDENT
Dr. HJALMAR SCHACHT²

Berlin, January 28, 1938

Received January 28, 1938
Reported to the Reichsminister³

Sehr verehrter Herr von Neurath,

Herewith I return the report of the visit of Lord Halifax and thank you for having let me see it.

Heil Hitler!

Yours faithfully,

Hjalmar Schacht

Reichsminister of Foreign Affairs
Freiherr von Neurath,
Berlin
Ministry of Foreign Affairs

RECORD OF A CONVERSATION BETWEEN THE
FÜHRER AND REICHSKANZLER AND LORD HALIFAX,
IN THE PRESENCE OF THE REICHSMINISTER OF
FOREIGN AFFAIRS, IN OBERSALZBERG,
NOVEMBER 19, 1937⁴

Lord Halifax began by saying that he welcomed the opportunity to achieve a better understanding between England and Germany by means of personal talks with the Führer. This would be of the greatest importance not only for the two countries, but for all European civilization. Before leaving England he had discussed this visit with the Prime Minister and the British Foreign Secretary, and they were in full agreement as to its aims. The purpose was to ascertain how the opportunity could be arranged for a comprehensive and frank discussion of all questions affecting the two countries. It was the opinion in England that the existing misunderstandings could be completely removed. The great services the Führer had rendered in the rebuilding of Germany were fully and completely recognized, and if British public opinion was sometimes taking a critical attitude

toward certain German problems, the reason might be in part that people in England were not fully informed of the motives and circumstances which underlie certain German measures. The English Church, for instance, was following the development of the Church question in Germany with deep concern and uneasiness. Labour Party circles were likewise critical of certain things in Germany. In spite of these difficulties he (Lord Halifax) and other members of the British Government were fully aware that the Führer had not only achieved a great deal inside Germany herself, but that, by destroying Communism in his country, he had barred its road to Western Europe, and that Germany therefore could rightly be regarded as a bulwark of the West against Bolshevism. The British Prime Minister held the view that it should be quite possible to find solutions by an open exchange of opinions. The solution even of difficult problems could be facilitated by mutual confidence. If Germany and Britain succeeded in coming, or even approaching nearer, to an understanding, it would, in the British view, be necessary that the countries which are politically close to Germany and England should be brought into the discussions. He had in mind Italy and France, to whom it must be made clear from the beginning that an Anglo-German rapprochement would not in any way be a manoeuvre hostile to Italy or France. There should not be the impression that the Berlin-Rome Axis or the good relations between London and Paris would suffer as the result of an Anglo-German understanding. After the ground had been prepared by an Anglo-German understanding, the four Great West-European Powers must jointly lay the foundation for lasting peace in Europe. Under no conditions should any of the four Powers remain outside this co-operation, or else there would be no end to the present unstable situation.

The Führer replied that an understanding between the four West-European Powers seemed to him very easy to arrange if it was just a matter of good will and mutual courtesy.

¹ Document from the Archives of the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Original.

² Letterhead.

³ Stamp.

⁴ Document from the Archives of the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs enclosed in Schacht's above letter to von Neurath of January 28, 1938. — Ed.

But it would be more difficult when it came to concrete fundamental problems. If Germany's co-operation is to be secured, then it must be asked how Germany will be regarded by the other partners—whether as a State in the sense of the Versailles Treaty, in which case it will hardly be possible to go beyond purely formal relations between the European countries. Or is Germany to be treated as a State which no longer carries the moral and material stigma of the Treaty of Versailles? In that case the logical conclusions must be drawn from this changed situation, because active co-operation in European policy could not be demanded of a State which was denied the warrant to act as a Great Power. The tragedy was that people in England and France still could not reconcile themselves to the thought that Germany, which after the Peace of Westphalia was for 250 years no more than a theoretical concept, had in the past fifty years become a reality.

It was the task of wise statesmanship to reconcile itself to this reality even if this should have certain unpleasant sides to it. The same was true of Italy and in a certain sense of Japan. History often creates realities which are not always pleasant. Germany had to put up with a reality of this kind, for Poland had not existed, so to speak, for more than 150 years, but now had been recalled to life. He (the Führer) considered it his chief task to educate the German people to put up with unpleasant political realities too. The essence of the problem to be discussed was, what active political co-operation could a country render which in other respects was denied the most urgent living necessities.

There were two possible ways of arranging relations between nations.

The free play of forces, which in many cases might mean active and drastic interference in the affairs of nations and might cause serious disturbances to our culture, which had been built up with such effort. The other way was, instead of the free play of forces, to permit the rule of "higher reason" (höhere Vernunft). It must, however, be realized that this higher reason must lead to roughly the same consequences as would result from the free play of forces. He (the Führer) had often asked himself in the past years whether mankind today was intelligent enough to

replace the free play of forces by the method of higher reason.

In 1919 a great chance was missed to apply this new method. An unreasonable settlement was then preferred. Germany was thereby driven to take the course of the free play of forces, since this in the long run was the only way she had of securing the most elementary human rights. The future will depend on which of these two methods is chosen.

One must, when assessing the sacrifices which the method of reason is certain to claim here or there, try to visualize what sacrifices would result from a reversion to the old method of the free play of forces. It will then be clear that the former way is the cheaper.

Lord Halifax agreed with the Führer that purely formal relations were of little worth and that far-reaching agreement could be achieved only when all parties took the same stand and unity of views were attained. He, for his part, was also convinced that something durable could be achieved only on a real foundation, even if the realities involved were unpleasant to one or another party. He stressed that everyone in England looked upon Germany as a great and sovereign country, and only on this basis should negotiations with her be conducted. Britons were realists, and were perhaps more than others convinced that the errors of the Versailles dictate must be rectified. Britain always exercised her influence in this realistic sense in the past. He pointed to Britain's role with regard to the evacuation of the Rhineland ahead of the fixed time, the settlement of the reparations problem, and the reoccupation of the Rhineland.¹ They must try to speak the same language, and refrain from indulging in loud talk, because this can only lead to misunderstandings and not make the problem any easier.

On the English side it was not necessarily thought that the status quo must be maintained under all circumstances. It was recognized that one might have to contemplate an adjustment to new conditions, a correction of former mistakes and the recognition of changed circumstances when such need arose. England would exert her influence only in the direction of preventing

¹ In the original: "ebenso wie bei der Wiederbesetzung des Rheinlandes."—Ed.

these changes from occurring by way of the unreasonable method to which the Führer referred, by the free play of forces, which, in the long run, implies war. He must once more stress, in the name of the British Government, that no possibility of changing the existing situation must be precluded, but that the changes must take place only on the basis of a reasonable arrangement. If both sides are agreed that the world is not static, then they must seek, on the basis of common ideals, to live up to this recognition in such a way as to direct the available energies in mutual confidence toward a common goal.

The Führer replied that he unfortunately had the impression that although the will was there to act in a reasonable way, there were big obstacles to reasonable solutions especially in the democratic countries, where political parties are in a position to exercise decisive influence on the actions of the government. He himself, in 1933-34, had made a number of practical proposals for the limitation of armaments, which if adopted would have saved Europe and the world a lot of money. These proposals were rejected one after another, although many statesmen were reasonable enough to realize that Germany could not remain for long in the position to which she had been reduced by the Versailles Treaty. But as political parties and above all the irresponsible press had a decisive influence on the decisions of governments, his proposals, such as for a 200,000-strong army, a 300,000-strong army, limitation of air armaments, were all rejected. The only result of his efforts to settle these questions was the naval agreement.

The situation was analogous today. Necessary reasonable solutions were frustrated by the demagogic line of the political parties. This was naturally a great difficulty. In contrast, he could point to the good relations he had established with Poland, in spite of the bad past. Yet Germany could not expect the least concession from other countries in regard to the satisfaction of her natural living requirements, because there the parties dominated. Germany was aware of the attitude of the parties in England toward the colonial question, especially the absolutely unfavourable attitude of the Conservatives. The same was the case in France. Germany could only take note of this attitude and rec-

ognize that under these conditions the colonial problem could not be settled. One had to wait. There were other instances when the demagogic attitude of the parties was the decisive factor instead of the statecraft of individual statesmen. Lithuania's seizure of the Memel region in 1923 and the subsequent treatment of Germany's protests was a striking example. That is why the majority of his proposals were rejected. In a way, he was regarded by the parties in the democratic countries as a black sheep, and the mere fact that a proposal came from him was enough for it to be rejected. Today too the influence of the parties was being manifested in a similar way. It was a fact that some nations had not sufficient living space. If England with her 46 million inhabitants had to live solely off the home country, it would perhaps be easier for her to understand this. The prejudiced attitude toward the colonial question entirely came from the fact that it was considered self-understood that America and Russia should possess great territories, that England should own one-quarter of the world, that France should have a colonial empire and that Japan should at least not be prevented from expanding. It was also considered self-understood that little countries like Belgium, Spain and Portugal should have colonies. Only Germany was told that under no circumstances must she have colonies. That characterized the attitude of the parties which, like the Conservatives in England, had taken an absolutely negative stand on the colonial question. What was the sense of inviting a country to positive co-operation, when in other matters it was denied the most primitive rights? Germany's behaviour in East Asia was criticized: it was declared to be a betrayal of the white race. Yet Germany remained faithful to the solidarity of the white race as against other races longer than any other country, and was criticized for her racial policy precisely by the democratic countries. Now she had given up all interest in East Asia. She might maintain business relations with this or that country. But since the German flag had vanished from East Asia, and since trade follows the flag, the business opportunities were in any event not very great.

International problems would be difficult to settle so long as political parties did not grow wiser, or forms of government were

not established which did not allow these parties to exercise so much influence on the governments.

The Führer also pointed in this connection to the press interference in the matter of Lord Halifax's visit to Germany. He did not doubt that certain circles in England thought realistically. The naval agreement was a proof of that. But the decisive political factors, it seemed to him, held a different position. That at any rate was his impression after his nearly five years of government. He believed that any proposal he made would at once be torpedoed and that any government that wanted to accept it would meet with big difficulties from the opposition.

Lord Halifax replied that if the Führer was really of the opinion that no advance could be made on the road to understanding so long as England was a democracy, further conversation could serve no useful purpose, for England would not change her present form of government so soon. Nor was it correct to say that opportunities had been missed and offers rejected because of the influence of the political parties. This was definitely not true in regard to England. Offers were rejected because, rightly or wrongly, certain countries did not consider those offers a sufficient guarantee of security. The non-acceptance of such proposals was a proof of the principle that disarmament must follow security, and not the other way round. That England concluded the naval agreement with Germany, in spite of the fact that much in it was objectionable from the party standpoint, was proof that the British Government also acted independently of the parties. It was certainly not the slave of demagogic party manoeuvres. In the English view no government which was worthy of the name was under the domination of the parties. Nor was it correct to say that proposals had been rejected because the Führer—the "black sheep"—had made them. Some countries saw how Germany ignored treaty obligations for reasons that possibly were convincing to Germany, but which were not very convincing to other countries. It was therefore only natural that German offers were scrutinized more critically in these quarters than might otherwise have been the case.

The British Government did not hold the

view that the colonial question should not be discussed with Germany under any circumstances. It knows that it is a difficult problem. It was however clear that no British Government could discuss the colonial question with Germany isolated from other questions. It could only be considered as part of a general settlement which would restore tranquility and security in Europe.

Other interested countries must naturally be brought into the discussion of a general settlement. The Führer had referred to circles in England who were hostile to Lord Halifax's visit. There were such hostile circles in other countries too. This however should not frighten those who wanted to build a better world political system.

The Führer replied that Lord Halifax had misunderstood him. Lord Halifax had proposed an agreement of the four Western Powers as the ultimate aim of Anglo-German co-operation. Among them was France, and his remarks regarding the demagoguery of the political parties applied primarily to France, of which they were probably one hundred per cent true. He had excluded England by referring to the naval agreement.

As regards the non-observance of treaty obligations, he remarked that other Powers had violated their treaty obligations before Germany, and only after all her proposals had been rejected did Germany resort to freedom of action. Even in the opinion of internationally recognized British jurists Germany had the right to demand the disarmament of other countries after she had fulfilled her treaty obligations in this respect one hundred per cent. She had also accepted the proposal of the late Prime Minister MacDonald regarding a 200,000-strong army. It was shipwrecked because of France.

In the colonial question, other countries had violated the Congo Act, which prohibited the carrying of war into African territory. Because she had trusted that the treaty would be observed by other countries, Germany had maintained only small military contingents in Africa.

Essentially, England and Germany had only one difference: the colonial question. It was a difference of views. If this could be eliminated, it was greatly to be welcomed. If not, then he (the Führer) could only regretfully take note of the fact. There were

many spheres in which Germany and England had different views. But none of them had ever had any direct bearing on Anglo-German co-operation. In the matter of the colonies there were two opinions on the English side. The British Government declared that discussion was possible. The parties—and especially the Conservative Party—totally rejected the possibility of discussion. There were no other difficulties as between Germany and Britain.

Lord Halifax asked the Führer whether he thought it possible, in the event of a satisfactory settlement of the disputed questions, to bring Germany back into the League of Nations with a view to closer co-operation with other countries, and in what way the Covenant of the League of Nations should, in his opinion, have to be amended before Germany could rejoin it. Undoubtedly the good sides of the League were exaggerated by its over-enthusiastic supporters. Nevertheless it must be admitted that the League stood for peaceful methods of settling international difficulties. If these methods could be realized in practice, this would bring us nearer to the second alternative which the Führer called, in contrast to the free play of forces, the "reasonable method." If the League were used in this way, and the League was after all an international method, the details of which could perhaps be altered, it would have considerable effect upon the re-establishment of confidence between the nations. He therefore wanted to know the Führer's attitude toward the League of Nations, as well as toward disarmament. All other questions could be characterized as relating to changes in the European order, changes that sooner or later would probably take place. To these questions belonged Danzig, Austria and Czechoslovakia. England was only interested that any alterations should be effected by peaceful evolution, so as to avoid methods which might cause far-reaching disturbances, which were not desired either by the Führer or by other countries.

The colonial question was undoubtedly difficult. The British Prime Minister was of the opinion that it could be settled only by way of a new start and as part of a general settlement. He asked the Führer whether he could not give him a general outline of the solution of the colonial problem as he conceived it.

The Führer replied that in his opinion the fact that Germany was not a member of the League of Nations was not an Anglo-German problem. For America was not in the League either, yet no one would say that there were profound differences of views between England and America for this reason. Moreover, the League, because of the absence of Japan and the inactivity of Italy, was not a real League of Nations any longer. Whether Germany would ever return to Geneva was something that could not at the present time be said. She would certainly not return to a rudimentary League of Nations, nor would she enter a League which regarded it as its function to resist the natural development of political events and stood for the perpetuation of the existing state of affairs.

It would have been much more easy to settle the disarmament question earlier, because then the question was only one of limitation of armaments. Now England was herself arming on a scale never before witnessed in English history. Was England prepared to give up armament? He, the Führer, knew that the answer of the English side to this question was that, in arming, England was only making up for lost time. Germany was in a similar position. She too had to make good what she had failed to do in the past owing to too great a fidelity to treaties. She furthermore knew by experience that nations are weighed by the strength of their armaments, and she could see today that her weight in international affairs had been enhanced by her armament. The disarmament problem had become extremely complicated owing to the French alliance with Russia, which followed as a reply to certain German measures. The result was that Russia had been brought into Europe not only as a moral, but also as a weighty material factor, especially in consequence of her alliance with Czechoslovakia. Who, under these circumstances, could tackle the question of disarmament, and how was it to be done? He really therefore did not know how the settlement of the disarmament problem was to be undertaken. In any case, he was a fanatical foe of conferences, which were foredoomed to failure. In no circumstances would he permit himself to be persuaded by statesmen who must have a conference every three months to have any part in such undertakings. If the

question of disarmament is to be tackled at all, it must be made clear from the beginning what is to be liable to disarmament. He referred to his earlier proposal to prohibit aerial bombing. Since the colonial powers regarded bombers as an effective means of breaking the resistance of refractory natives, they had rejected this proposal as contrary to their interests. In the light of the latest war experience in various parts of the world they were now even inclined to increase the number of their bombers.

Germany was arming, and she would not complain. She would observe her contractual obligations under the naval agreement, with the reservation, however, which was made by the German side at the time of the conclusion of the naval agreement, that Russia would not go in for unlimited naval armament. In that case a revision of the naval agreement would be necessary. He, however, did not have such a high opinion of Russian efficiency as to believe that such a contingency would arise in the foreseeable future.

If reasonable counsels prevailed a settlement could also be reached with Czechoslovakia and Austria. With Austria the treaty of July 11 had been concluded, and it was to be hoped that it would lead to the removal of all difficulties. It rested with Czechoslovakia herself to clear away the existing difficulties. All she had to do was to treat the Germans within her borders properly and then they would be quite satisfied. Germany herself was deeply interested in maintaining good relations with all her neighbours.

As to the colonial question, it was not for Germany to express any wishes. There were two possibilities. First, the free play of forces. What colonies Germany would take in this case could not be foretold. The second possibility was a reasonable settlement. Reasonable settlements must be based on right, in other words, Germany was entitled to her former possessions. When it was declared on all sides that international order must not be built on force but on right, he, the Führer, fully agreed. He would even be glad if the date from which this new order was deemed to operate were referred back prior to 1914. Germany under the new arrangement would be extremely well off. He repeated that Germany saw no need to express any wishes with regard to colonies—

she stood solely on the basis of right. It was for England and France to make proposals, if for any reason they thought the restitution of any particular German colony inconvenient. Germany's colonial demands were not prompted by imperial or military ambitions. It was not her intention to edge herself into any strategical line, she wanted colonies solely for economic reasons, as a source of supply of agricultural produce and raw materials. She was not eager to have colonies in areas where guns were liable to go off and where there was a great danger of international complications. If England, from strategical considerations, did not think it possible to return some territories, she could suggest compensation in other areas.

In any event Germany would not accept the Sahara as a colony, or territories in the Mediterranean, for she considered a position between two world empires a little too dangerous. Tsingtao and Kiaochow were also too exposed.

Foreign Minister Freiherr von Neurath said in connection with the question of the League of Nations that since Germany left the League she had never declined international co-operation whenever there was a prospect of practical action, and not just of talk. An illustration was Germany's collaboration on the question of non-intervention in Spain.

The Führer, on his part, referred likewise to the German-Polish and German-Austrian settlements and expressed the hope that a sensible solution could also be found with Czechoslovakia.

Lord Halifax replied that on some points he did not quite agree with the Führer, but he did not intend to go into them in further detail, because they concerned things which were not of decisive importance in the present talks.

Chamberlain and the British Government would be gratified if today's comprehensive and frank discussion were followed by further talks on individual questions between representatives of the two governments. It was regrettable that nothing followed Simon's and Eden's visit, and if this talk were to be followed by further negotiations it would make an extremely favourable impression on public opinion.

The Führer replied that he contemplated the continuation of the Anglo-German con-

tact at first through diplomatic channels, for if the intention was to negotiate on concrete questions they would have to be carefully prepared beforehand. The chief reason for the failure of many similar negotiations in the past was lack of preparation. A conference could only come as the consummation of previous preparatory negotiations. It was clear to him that the most difficult issue was the colonial problem, about which the two sides were still very far removed from each other. England and France must make up their minds whether they were prepared to meet Germany's demands in general, and in what direction. Germany could only make her demands known and hope that they would be given a reasonable reception.

After the lunch interval, Lord Halifax again reverted to the question of continuing the Anglo-German contact, and once more suggested direct negotiations between representatives of the governments. Such negotiations would not only be of value in themselves, but would also make a favourable impression on public opinion. There would be disappointment if these direct negotiations were postponed too long. Very much had been expected in England from the visit of the German Foreign Minister and there was great disappointment when in consequence of the "Leipzig" and "Deutschland" incident this visit could not take place. It would therefore be a good thing if further negotiations were now held between German and British representatives. There the colonial question could be discussed, and, he repeated, the British Government was quite ready to discuss this question. True, he must again add that any British Government could only examine the colonial problem as part of a general settlement. All the questions to be settled must be tackled simultaneously on a wide front.

The Führer replied that it was precisely negotiations on a wide front that required adequate preparation. In his opinion it would be better not to start discussions at all than to land in a situation where it had to be admitted that the results of the negotiations were unsatisfactory. It would be better to wait. Two such realistic nations as the German and the English should not allow themselves to be influenced by fear of a catastrophe. People were always saying that if this or that did not happen Europe would be heading for catastrophe. The only

catastrophe was Bolshevism. Everything else could be settled. The mood of catastrophe was the work of an excited and malignant press. It was wrong to assert that the international situation today was exactly similar to what it was in 1912-14. Perhaps it would have been if there had not been the war with its lessons in the interval. He was not one of the politically nervous. A few years hence today's problems might perhaps look quite different. In a calmer atmosphere, after the situation in East Asia and Spain were cleared up, it would perhaps be easier to settle many things. If, therefore, one or other problem was at present too difficult, one might calmly wait two or three years.

The fateful thing was the role of the press. It alone was responsible for nine-tenths of the tension. The Spanish crisis and the alleged occupation of Morocco by German troops were examples which vividly illustrated the danger of irresponsible journalism. A direct premise for the pacification of international relations was therefore that all nations should co-operate in putting an end to journalistic filibustering.

Lord Halifax agreed with what the Führer had said about the dangers of the press. He also was of the opinion that the Anglo-German negotiations should be carefully prepared. Chamberlain had told him before he left that he would willingly take upon himself the risk that Lord Halifax's visit to Germany might be misrepresented in the press, provided this visit at least accomplished one step in the right direction. All that was needed was that both sides should have one aim in view, namely, the establishment and consolidation of peace in Europe.

Then Lord Halifax expressed his thanks for the opportunity for this talk and said that he would make a full and precise report of it to the British Premier. The Führer likewise expressed satisfaction at having had so frank and comprehensive a talk with Lord Halifax and said that he could fully accept on behalf of Germany the aim just mentioned by Lord Halifax. No one who, like him, had been a soldier in the world war wanted another war. Such too was the tendency in England and other countries. Only one country, Soviet Russia, stood to gain from a general conflict. All others were at heart in favour of the consolidation of peace.

No. 3

CONVERSATION BETWEEN HITLER AND HENDERSON¹

MEMORANDUM

OF A CONVERSATION BETWEEN THE FÜHRER AND REICHSKANZLER AND HIS BRITANNIC MAJESTY'S AMBASSADOR, IN THE PRESENCE OF REICHSMINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS VON RIBBENTROP, ON MARCH 3, 1938, IN BERLIN

The British Ambassador began by stressing the confidential nature of the conversation. Nothing regarding the subject of the talks would be divulged to the French, and still less to the Belgians, Portuguese or Italians. They would only be told that the conversation was a sequel to the talks between Lord Halifax and the Führer and related to questions concerning Germany and England.

He, Henderson, wanted, on the one hand, to set forth in broad outline an attempt at a solution suggested by the British Government, and if possible to hear the German view from the Führer. He pointed out that he was speaking only for the British Government, which wanted to have a clear idea of the situation before getting into contact with other Powers for the realization of its proposals. In relation to third Powers, therefore, this conversation must be confidential.

Furthermore, he had to stress that this was not a commercial deal but an attempt to establish a basis for genuine and cordial friendship with Germany, beginning with an improvement of the atmosphere and ending with the creation of a new spirit of friendly understanding. Without underrating the difficulties to be overcome, the British Government believed that the moment was favourable for such an attempt to improve mutual relations. But the attempt was bound to fail if both sides did not contribute to the effort to reach agreement, in other words, if agreement were to be achieved, it could only be on a basis of reciprocity. Germany's positive contribution was needed for the establishment of tranquility and security in Europe. As was already made clear in the course of the Halifax conversation, instead of the free play of forces, a solution dictated by higher rea-

son must be found. Lord Halifax had already admitted that changes in Europe were to be regarded as quite possible, but these changes must follow the lines of the aforesaid higher reason. The purpose of the British proposal was to contribute to such a reasonable settlement.

After the British Ambassador had made these personal observations, he proceeded to communicate his instructions. He stated that, on the instructions of his Government in London, in conversations with Prime Minister Chamberlain and other interested members of the Cabinet, he had examined all the questions that had arisen in connection with Halifax's visit to Germany. He stressed in this connection the importance of German co-operation in the tranquilization of Europe, to which he had already referred in earlier conversations with Herr von Neurath and Herr von Ribbentrop. Such tranquilization could be furthered by limitation of armaments and by appeasement in Czechoslovakia and Austria. In connection with this the British Ambassador orally communicated the following instructions, which he then transmitted in written form:

"In the opinion of the British Government, mutual appeasement will depend, among other things, upon measures undertaken with the object of creating confidence in Austria and Czechoslovakia. The British Government is not yet in a position properly to assess the consequences of the agreements recently reached between Austria and the German Reich, and these consequences must necessarily depend on the manner in which both parties implement the various obligations and arrangements. The British Government is therefore still in doubt as to how these agreements will influence the situation in Central Europe, and it cannot overlook the fact that the latest developments have caused concern in many quarters, which will unavoidably hamper a general settlement."

In reference to limitation of armaments, Henderson remarked that the British Government was of course aware of the difficulties, and he recalled the Führer's proposal to ban aerial bombing. The British

¹ Document from the Archives of the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Copy.

Government would gladly welcome such a proposal. But what it considered even more important was to limit bomber aircraft in general. Taking into consideration the German proposals made two years ago, the British Government was again studying the whole set of questions here involved and hoped to be able to make acceptable proposals. It would be interesting to hear the German attitude toward this question.

In reference to the colonies, the British Ambassador stated that the British Government was earnestly prepared not only to examine the colonial question, but also to make an advance toward its settlement. Prime Minister Chamberlain was personally dedicating all his attention to this question. Here, too, of course, the difficulties were great, since twenty years had elapsed since the last rearrangement of colonial possessions. Besides, public opinion in England was particularly sensitive on this point. The British Ambassador then read the following proposal on the colonial question, which he transmitted in writing at the end of the conversation:

"A solution which in the opinion of the British Government would have many advantages would be to work out a plan based on a new regime of colonial administration in some given part of Africa: this plan should embrace an area roughly equal to the Congo Basin, and should be accepted and applied by all the interested Powers. Each of them, although it would be alone responsible for the administration of its own territories, would be called upon to guide itself by certain principles designed to further the general welfare.

"Here, for example, the question of demilitarization would arise, both for the welfare of the natives and for the sake of freedom of trade and communication. It might also be that a commission composed of representatives of all the Powers owning parts of the given territory would be set up."

In reading this proposal, he mentioned that the territory in question would be bounded in the North roughly by the 5th parallel, and in the South roughly by the River Zambesi, and added that a commission would probably be set up composed of the Powers whose colonial possessions were situated within this area. He concluded by asking the Führer

1) whether Germany was prepared in prin-

ciple to participate in a new colonial regime as contemplated in the British proposal, and

2) what contribution she was prepared to make toward general tranquility and security in Europe?

The Führer replied that the most important contribution to the establishment of tranquility and security in Europe would be to ban the international inflammatory press, because nothing menaced security more than the intrigues of this press, which was unfortunately widely represented in Britain too. He pointed out that he personally was known to be one of the warmest friends of England, but that his friendship had been evilly repaid. Nobody perhaps was more often or more bluntly repulsed by England than he. It was therefore understandable that he had now withdrawn into a certain isolation, which seemed to him more dignified than to offer himself to those who did not want him and were constantly rejecting him.

To the objection of the British Ambassador that this rejection came only from certain circles in England, the Führer rejoined that the British Government must have been in a position to influence the press to adopt a different tone. Germany had information from friends in England that the press was influenced by the highest quarters in taking the trend in question, consequently the primary thing was that the inflammatory press campaign must cease.

In reference to Central Europe, he had to remark that Germany would not allow third Powers to interfere in the settlement of her relations with kindred countries or countries with large German populations, just as it would not enter Germany's head to interfere in the regulation of Anglo-Irish relations. The thing, therefore, was to prevent the continuation or resumption of an injustice toward millions of Germans. In this attempt at regulation, Germany must declare with all seriousness that she will not consent to allow this regulation to be in any way influenced from any other quarter. It was impermissible that on the one hand freedom of nations and the democratic rights should be always represented as elements of the European order, but that the very opposite should be asserted when it was a question of improving the lot of the Germans in Austria, where a government, which came into being not in a legal way, as the German Government had, and which

had only fifteen per cent of the population behind it, was oppressing the other Germans. Such a situation could not continue for long, and if England continued to oppose the German effort to achieve a just and reasonable settlement here, then the moment would come when it would be necessary to fight. When he, the Führer, was striving, as he had done at Berchtesgaden, to lighten the lot of the oppressed Germans by peaceful means, yet Paris and London not only treated his efforts sceptically, but instructed their diplomats to hinder the accomplishment of these peaceful attempts (here the British Ambassador interjected that England had never done so), they were rendering a very poor service to peace. After all, in order to achieve a satisfactory settlement, in Austria the people themselves should be asked, and in Czechoslovakia the Germans must be granted the autonomy to which they are entitled both culturally and in other respects. This would be the most elementary application of that right to self-determination of nations which figured so largely in Wilson's fourteen points. At any rate, the present situation could not continue for long, it would lead to an explosion, and it was in order to avoid this that the agreements were concluded in Berchtesgaden, and it might be said that the difficulties might be regarded as removed if the Austrian Government carried out its promises. Those who, on the contrary, apply force against reason and right, call force into the field, as he had already said in his speech in the Reichstag.

In reply to an inquiry from the British Ambassador whether Germany demanded a plebiscite in Austria, the Führer said that what was required was that by the road of evolution the legitimate interests of the German Austrians were guaranteed and the oppression ceased.

The British Ambassador stated that the present British Government had a keen sense of reality. Chamberlain had taken over the leadership of the people, instead of allowing himself to be led by the people. He had displayed great courage when, heeding nothing, he unmasked such international phrases as collective security and the like. It was difficult to find in history two men who not only wanted the same thing, but were above all also determined to achieve it at one and the same moment. England therefore declared her readiness to

remove all difficulties and asked Germany whether she was prepared, on her part, to do the same.

The Führer referred to the proposals he had made some years ago. The reply was the Franco-Russian pact, which, when it was joined by Czechoslovakia, became particularly dangerous to Germany, because it constituted a grave menace to the industrial regions on the Reich's frontiers, in the Ruhr and in Saxony, and the enemy was always in a position to strike at the very heart of Germany. It was therefore necessary on the German side to take thorough measures of defence against this encirclement. Consequently, the limitation of armaments in a large degree hinged on Soviet Russia. What was to be expected from that quarter was recently made clear in a speech by Voroshilov, in which it was announced that the Soviet armed forces would not hesitate to use poison gases. Germany must be armed against this. The problem was especially complicated by the fact that one could no more rely on so barbaric a creation as the Soviet Union observing treaty obligations than on a savage understanding mathematical formulas. Agreements with that country would therefore be as good as worthless. Soviet Russia should not have been allowed into Europe. He, the Führer, when he made his proposals had had in mind a union of Europe without Russia.

Asked by the British Ambassador whether Germany would join in a ban of aerial bombing, the Führer replied that he had long ago made known his attitude toward this question, and could only add today that Germany would no longer allow herself to be deceived by empty promises, as had been the case with Wilson's fourteen points. Even if the Soviet Union were to declare today that it no longer intended to drop poison gas bombs, no faith could be placed in such a declaration.

To the objection of the British Ambassador that the question at this moment was solely one of the relations between England and Germany, the Führer replied that England had no trouble to fear from Germany, that Germany was not interfering in Empire affairs. But it had been her experience that whenever she endeavoured to solve her difficulties England reacted negatively. When an attempt is made to find a solution in the East, the British "No!" is to be heard just as it is when colonies are

demand, and everywhere the British press stands in the way of Germany and conducts a campaign of calumny against her.

The British Ambassador replied that the blame for the appearance of false news in the press lay not only with the British side: the working of the German press censorship was the cause of the origin of many false reports, and furthermore there had been strong attacks on England in the German press, especially at the time he had entered on his duties.

In answer to this the Führer pointed out that for three years, from 1933 to 1936, absolute silence had been maintained in Germany in face of all the British attacks. But, while Germany had never interfered in Britain's affairs, in Ireland, etc., there were continuous attempts at interference from the English side, by the bishops, by certain Members of Parliament, and by others.

In this connection the British Ambassador mentioned in confidence that Lord Halifax had today appointed a press conference of responsible newspaper editors, and had also had a talk with the president of the Newspaper Proprietors' Association and leading officials of the BBC, in the course of which he had again emphasized their responsibility in the maintenance of peace. In view of British freedom of the press, more than this could not be done. It was worthy of note, however, that the new British Foreign Secretary, who on the basis of his talks in Germany was fully informed of the German viewpoint, had here, as in other matters, already exercised his influence very considerably, by means of the British way of personal contact. In order to illustrate that on the German side too there were misapprehensions about conditions in England, the British Ambassador instanced the false opinion in Germany that the Vansittart Committee was behind the wave of anti-German propaganda. He could affirm on his word of honour that this Committee had nothing to do with the false reports. It was in general not an instrument of propaganda against any country; its purpose rather was to win sympathy for Britain and the British world empire.

Reichsminister of Foreign Affairs von Ribbentrop pointed in this connection to Reuter's two weeks' lie campaign. No one responsible for the false reports was dis-

missed or even reprimanded. There must be a system behind it.

The Führer took note of the reiterated assurance of the British Ambassador (the latter had declared that the Committee had not yet really begun to function) regarding the Vansittart Committee and, summing up, said that if the tension was to be relieved, the decisive thing was that the press should be better instructed, that the inflammatory reports should cease and an attitude of greater objectivity adopted.

To a question from the Führer regarding the new colonial regime, the British Ambassador, pointing to a map, replied that the British Government envisaged a system with principles similar to those of the Berlin agreement of 1885 (this presumably refers to the Congo Act). The colonies in this region of Africa would be redistributed. Germany would be considered in this redistribution, and would therefore have a colonial possession under her sovereignty. All the Powers possessing colonies in this Central African territory would however have to assume definite obligations in respect to demilitarization, freedom of trade and treatment of the natives.

The Führer replied that, naturally, Germany was above all interested in what was to happen to her former colonies. Instead of setting up a complicated new system, why not settle the colonial question in the simplest and most natural way, namely, by restoring to Germany her former colonies? True, he, the Führer, was bound to admit openly that he did not think that the colonial question was ripe for settlement, since Paris and London were too firmly committed not to restore the colonies. He therefore did not want to press the matter. One could calmly wait four, six, eight or ten years. Perhaps by then a change of mind will have taken place in Paris and London, and it will be seen that the best solution would be to restore to Germany the property she had lawfully acquired by purchase and treaty. The premise for Germany's co-operation in a new colonial regime was therefore the restitution of her former colonies, which had been lawfully acquired, and which had been taken away from her by the treaty. Germany did not want to burden countries which were not involved with the settlement of the colonial question. Perhaps also Belgium and Portugal would not consent, and

perhaps they might think that Germany was demanding something from them to which she was not entitled.

The British Ambassador once again explained the British colonial plan on the globe, and, in reply to a question from the Führer, Sir Neville Henderson declared that he believed Portugal and Belgium and, in the long run, France and Italy would participate in the settlement.

The conversation then reverted to the Central European problems and, in reply to the remark of the British Ambassador that Chamberlain could achieve something only if Germany made her contribution, the Führer replied that the Berchtesgaden agreement with Austria was to be regarded as his contribution to this matter, but that he must however declare with all emphasis that if ever Germans in Austria or Czechoslovakia were fired on, the German Reich would be on 'the spot.'¹ He, the Führer, had had to do much talking in the course of his political career, and therefore perhaps certain circles believed that his words were not always to be taken too seriously. But those who thought that his statements on the Central European questions were pure rhetoric were cruelly deceived. If explosions from within were to occur in Austria or Czechoslovakia, Germany would not remain neutral but would act with lightning speed. It was therefore a mistake for certain diplomats or for certain elements to tell the Vienna Government that it had nothing to fear, and that it need not carry out its obligations to the letter.

Reichsminister of Foreign Affairs von Ribbentrop here drew attention to the dramatic conversation between the British Minister in Vienna and Herr von Papen, in the course of which the Minister heatedly complained of the pressure Germany had allegedly exerted on Austria. The pressure at Berchtesgaden consisted solely in the fact that Austria's attention was drawn to certain dangers, and a means of eliminating them was envisaged. If the British Minister protested in such a dramatic way to Herr von Papen, then how must he have talked to Austrian Foreign Minister Schmidt.

The British Ambassador said that the statements of the Minister did not necessarily represent the views of the British

Government, and declared that he, Sir Neville Henderson, had often expressed himself in favour of the Anschluss.

The Führer replied to this that there were certain things which were simply unbearable for a Great Power. England declared that she could not tolerate an attack upon Belgium or Holland. He, the Führer, must declare with equal emphasis that if Germans continue to be oppressed in Central Europe in the same way or by other methods, Germany must and will interfere.

The British Ambassador summed up the German standpoint with regard to Austria and Czechoslovakia as meaning that if the Germans in those countries continue to be oppressed an explosion would follow, and that, on the contrary, if full equality were granted, no conflict was to be expected.

On the question of the limitation of air armaments the Führer remarked that disarmament naturally could not be undertaken only in definite parts of the world, since the air arm was extremely mobile. For instance, an air force from the Far East could easily be employed in Europe. Territorial limitations were therefore not to be considered. He, the Führer, when he made his earlier proposals, had been guided by the thought that the Geneva Convention forbade war against non-combatants. Unfortunately his proposals were not accepted. The British Ambassador replied that it was true that formerly the British Government would not hear of a prohibition of bombing, but that it now took a different stand, and, in conclusion, he added that for various reasons the present moment was favourable for talks concerning armaments. Germany was strong, but England too was again strong. Germany had awakened England out of her slumber, so that neither of the two negotiating parties could assume that the talks were prompted by fear or weakness. He, the Ambassador, shared General Field Marshal Göring's view that only negotiations between the strong promise to be fruitful. On the other hand, a lot of money was being spent on armaments, so that from this point of view too there was an incentive to limitation.

The Führer replied that German armament was made necessary by Russia. It was a matter of life and death to Germany to protect her position in Central Europe, and she must arm against an attack by Soviet Russia, which naturally could never be

¹ In the original: "das Deutsche Reich dann zur Stelle sein würde."—Ed.

checked by the Border States or by Poland. Hence, when talking of armament, the British should begin with Russia.

To the repeated question of the British Ambassador regarding Germany's attitude toward the British colonial proposal, the Führer, in view of the importance of the matter, promised to give an answer in writing.

Asked by Reichsminister of Foreign Affairs von Ribbentrop whether the British Government could contemplate the restitu-

tion of all¹ the former colonies, including those now in the possession of British dominions, the British Ambassador replied that he could only speak for Great Britain and that what he said did not refer to the dominions.

Signed: *Dr. Schmidt*
Legationsrat²

¹ Underscored in the original.—Ed.

² There is a notation at the foot of the original document: "Submitted to Reichsminister of Foreign Affairs von Ribbentrop, according to instructions. Berlin, March 3, 1938."—Ed.

No. 11

REPORT OF THE POLISH AMBASSADOR IN PARIS LUKASIEWICZ OF A CONVERSATION WITH THE FRENCH FOREIGN MINISTER BONNET¹

EMBASSY OF THE POLISH
REPUBLIC IN PARIS

Copy

No. 1/F/18

Re: Conversation with Foreign Minister
Bonnet

POLITICAL REPORT No. XVII/2

Strictly confidential
Paris, May 27, 1938

The Minister of Foreign Affairs,
Warsaw

Today, at 11:45, I called upon Minister Bonnet in accordance with your instructions of the 24th inst., No. 8, Berlin.

Desiring to be as exact as possible, I read to M. Bonnet a practically word for word translation of the text received from you. M. Bonnet wrote down my statement, considering it to be a communication of great importance.

After reading my statement twice, M. Bonnet, as on the occasion of our previous conversation, did not proceed at once to discuss it, but began with general remarks. He told me that he had had a talk with General Gamelin on the subject of our strategic position in the event that Czechoslovakia were occupied by the Germans, and that the French General Staff considered that this would greatly and very dangerously prejudice our military position. Bonnet intends to continue his talks with rep-

resentatives of the French Army on this subject in order to make a thorough study of the General Staff's arguments. However, he requested that I at once draw the attention of my Government to the above. Next, M. Bonnet expressed the conviction that although the German-Czech conflict had arisen over the question of the German minority, yet when analyzing this conflict it was necessary to look beyond the minority problem and to realize that the issue at stake was the maintenance of peace and the checking of Germany's dangerous expansion in Central Europe. "There are many national minority problems," my vis-à-vis remarked. "Today we are occupied with some, in the future we shall be occupied with others." This was an indirect, but in my opinion not malicious, hint at our national minority problems.

Then, proceeding to discuss my communication, M. Bonnet said that the French Government was not asking anything of Poland in connection with the Czechoslovak problem, but the French Government would like to be able to reckon on our co-operation in the maintenance of peace, as well as in the resistance to German expansion. If the Polish Government did not consider it possible to present a declaration to Berlin analogous to that of the British Government, it might publish a declaration which would not contain any new commitments but would announce that the Polish Gov-

¹ Original in Polish.

ernment deemed it necessary to take every measure for the maintenance of peace, that certain events might lead to the development of a general conflict, and that, lastly, Poland could not remain impassive in such a situation and still did not know which of the belligerent sides she would have to join. Bonnet requests you to consider the possibility of our publishing such or a similar declaration, and to let him know.

Then M. Bonnet began to speak at length, and with manifest emphasis on this problem, of relations with the Soviet Union in the present situation and, to a certain extent, divorced from it. The Franco-Soviet pact, he said, was very "vague"¹ and the French Government was not at all inclined to rely upon it. It would play a role and be of importance only in connection with the way Poland's vacillations were taken in France. M. Bonnet personally was no adherent of collaboration with Communism. The French Government wanted to rely entirely on Poland and to co-operate with her. It would like our relations as allies to be more precisely defined and extended. M. Bonnet would be very pleased if, after elucidating the question of collaborating with Poland, he could tell the Soviets that France does not need their assistance.

However, the positive sides of the Franco-Soviet pact should not be overlooked. In the event of war with Germany the pact would serve as a basis for demanding of Moscow such assistance in the form of materiel and raw materials as might be needed. In certain circumstances Poland might utilize the pact to her advantage.

Under present conditions it might be affirmed that the Franco-Soviet pact would not have to play an important role, if the Franco-Polish alliance could become fully effective.

Having thus elucidated the problem of Soviet Russia, M. Bonnet passed to the question of our minority in Czechoslovakia. Here he manifested not only uneasiness, but even a certain irritability. I shall try to convey what he said in the following lines:

The question of the Polish minority in Czechoslovakia was not analogous to that of the German minority, both because of the size of the population involved in the two cases, and because the Polish minority

concerned a State which was bound by alliance with France. Moreover, this minority resided in the territory of a State with which France was friendly. It might be said with confidence that after the question of the German minority had been settled, Czechoslovakia would have to proceed to settle the question of the Polish and other minorities. However, in the opinion of the Minister, it would be highly vexatious and inexplicable if Poland's demands respecting the minority were to complicate the situation and cause new tension, and, as might be expected, at exactly the moment the Sudeten question was being adjusted. The French Government appreciated the importance of the minority question to Poland, but the Polish Government must not make use of this question for actions that might lead to still more serious complications or prevent the Polish Government from adopting a favourable attitude toward the Anglo-French efforts for a peaceful settlement of the conflict that might arise between Germany and Czechoslovakia. It was highly unpleasant and dangerous that M. le Ministre² not only declined to undertake the démarche in Berlin in which the French Government is so interested and to define Poland's attitude in the event of a Franco-German conflict, but on top of this was putting forward new demands, and moreover in so immoderate a form as to be fraught with new difficulties and dangers.

Seeing that M. Bonnet was not acquainted with the matter, or did not understand the communication I had made in your name, or did not want to understand it (which is less likely), I interrupted him and said that not a single new demand was being advanced by us in this instance.

The question of our minority in Czechoslovakia was of long standing, and all this time the Prague Government had done nothing to settle it, except make promises. Nor had the sympathy and influence of the French Government been of any effect in the course of many years. In no circumstances could we tolerate for a moment that the problem of the Polish minority be settled after the settlement of the question of the Sudeten Germans. This problem must be settled simultaneously and on entirely analogous lines with the settlement of the problem of the Germans. Size of

¹ In the original Polish text this word is written in French, and in inverted commas.—Ed.

² I.e., Beck.—Ed.

population was of no consequence or importance. For that matter, if I was not mistaken, the Czechoslovak Minister in Warsaw had informed the Polish Foreign Minister about a fortnight ago that the Czech Government recognized our right to the most favoured nation clause with respect to the Polish national minority, in other words, was willing to grant the Polish minority the same rights as may be granted to the German minority. I could not understand why the special communication of the Polish Foreign Minister on this subject, made with the object of informing the French Government of our position and attitude, as well as of the significance of the problem, should arouse such uneasiness and agitation. Surely, M. Bonnet did not think we could or would wait for the settlement of the question of our minority until the problem of the Sudeten Germans had been successfully settled, as I hoped it would be. With the settlement of the Sudeten German problem the present tension would end; the influence of the Powers in Prague would become what it was before the conflict, and Czechoslovakia would return to her old policy of not fulfilling her promises. This would be too naive, and Polish public opinion would not understand such a policy, and would not stand for it. I thought that if M. Bonnet turned his attention to this problem and carefully analyzed it, he would realize the correctness and necessity of the stand we were taking.

After this rejoinder of mine, M. Bonnet considerably moderated his tone, and somewhat modified his attitude toward the problem. He did not revert to the thesis of a separate settlement of the problem of our minority; however, he took care in the further course of the conversation to impress upon me that we should not attach too much political importance to this question, that in the end it would be settled, and that the French Government would see to it that it was settled. In the course of his argument, Bonnet said that he would like us to state the rights we sought for our minority more specifically. I replied that as a matter of fact, in order to avoid unnecessary complications, and taking into account that our minority was smaller than other minorities, all we asked was that our minority should be regarded as having equal rights with other, larger minorities. Hav-

ing thus parried M. Bonnet's arguments on the subject of the minority, I said that I would report to you all his remarks and questions and would await further instructions. Meanwhile, I said, I would like to communicate to him some of my personal observations.

As regards General Gamelin's opinion that our strategic position would be greatly and dangerously prejudiced if Germany seized the whole of Czechoslovakia, although I was not a military man, I believed he was perfectly right. Only I could not understand why attention was drawn to this, since in my opinion the assumption was purely theoretical and was absolutely precluded. I did not know whether Hitler wanted autonomy for the Sudeten Germans or the annexation of the territory they inhabited. But I had never heard that he was out for the annexation of the whole of Czechoslovakia. I therefore considered that reflections on the situation, which General Gamelin probably assessed correctly, were pointless. As regards the possibility of our undertaking a démarche in Berlin with the object of easing the situation, which M. Bonnet had suggested, I considered that we had already done exactly what he wished. We had done so, not in the form of a démarche in Berlin, but in connection with the report in the **Evening Standard**, when, in our denial, we publicly declared that in the event of serious complications we reserved the right to make our decisions. I emphasized that this ought to be considered a valuable contribution on our part to the efforts for the maintenance of peace.

Lastly, I added, in order to avoid misunderstanding or unclarity, I ought to point out that in the talks between General Gamelin and Marshal Rydz Smigly the question of material assistance and aid in the form of raw materials from Soviet Russia was raised by General Gamelin, but that Marshal Rydz Smigly categorically excluded talk or discussion on this subject; there was therefore nothing to refer to. I did not say a word on the subject of Soviet Russia, bearing in mind that your instructions were not to discuss it, and knowing that in the present situation the subject was inappropriate. To these brief remarks of mine, M. Bonnet replied that perhaps the presumption that Germany would annex all Czechoslovakia was too hypothetical, but that Göring's plan to partition Czechoslo-

vakia between Germany and Hungary and to turn over Teschen Silesia to Poland was no secret. The effectuation of this plan would be equivalent to the annexation of the whole of Czechoslovakia, and the annexation of the territories inhabited by the German minority would greatly worsen Poland's position from the military standpoint.

I replied that in my opinion it was absolutely unreasonable to presume that in the twentieth century, after a great war, a result of which was the triumph of the national principle, any State, even one stronger than Germany, could annex territories inhabited by other nations against their will. I expressed the belief that if the Czechs were determined to fight for the Sudetenland, they would certainly defend Prague to the last drop of their blood. I acknowledged the correctness of the view that if the present conflict were to end with the annexation of the Sudetenland by Germany, this would worsen the strategical position of Czechoslovakia.

Taking advantage of my reference to the talks between Marshal Rydz Smigly and General Gamelin regarding possible assistance from Soviet Russia, M. Bonnet reverted to the question of the Franco-Soviet pact and said the following:

Should a conflict arise between Poland and Germany, the Franco-Soviet pact might be of positive value to Poland, first, by eliminating the likelihood of a fight on two fronts, and, second, by affording the possibility of material aid and assistance in the form of raw materials. That a conflict between Germany and Poland was probable could not be doubted. Stresemann, in his time, had categorically affirmed in private conversation with M. Bonnet that Germany would never agree to the existing frontier with Poland. It was hard to believe that this view in Germany had cardinally changed since the National Socialists came to power. Consequently, an improvement of relations with Russia would undoubtedly be of value to Poland.

M. Bonnet then again reverted to the question of the minority, and stressed that we should not draw too far-reaching conclusions with respect to so important a problem as the maintenance of peace in Europe. In his opinion, we should pay attention to public opinion in France. The denial published after the report in the **Evening**

Standard had made a most painful impression on the French public. French public opinion was deeply disappointed by Poland's attitude, and it would undoubtedly be profoundly shocked if it learned that Poland not only refused to undertake a *démarche* in Berlin and to define her position in the event of a Franco-German war, but was preparing to make things even worse by couching her demands in a very trenchant form. It was necessary to be cautious. It would be very desirable if the Polish Government could find an appropriate way in which to confirm that it was taking part in the efforts for a peaceful settlement of the conflict, and that it set great value on them.

My reply was roughly as follows:

I am surprised that our denial produced such a painful impression on French public opinion, as I believe that this was also the way it was received in Berlin. In my opinion, our denial should be regarded as a valuable contribution to the cause of peace. I was glad that M. Bonnet had referred to public opinion, as I wished to draw his attention to the necessity of caution in this respect, as well as to the necessity of concern being displayed on the part of the Quai d'Orsay respecting the behaviour of the French press. I remarked that there was still alive among the Polish public the unpleasant memory of the unfriendly attitude of the entire French press toward us at a time when Poland was experiencing great difficulty in connection with the Lithuanian incident. I recalled the deplorable (*néfaste*) conduct of French diplomacy in the settlement of a problem of such vital importance to Poland. The impression was still alive in our memories that at that crucial moment for Poland not only was France not on our side, but, on the contrary, she, ignoring our interests, was absorbed with the question of the possible passage of Soviet troops through the territories of other countries in the event of a war with Germany. In such circumstances, any fresh attacks on the part of the French press would be more than undesirable.

At this point of the conversation, M. Bonnet tried to assure me that France after all did advise Lithuania to make her peace with us, to which I replied that I had no wish to start a discussion on this point, because it would be too painful, and I would like to have the opportunity to forget it.

Then, in a friendly but categorical form, I declared that our most important duty at this moment was to further the efforts toward mutual understanding of the interests and positions of our States. We were situated at two different ends of Europe, and therefore we might have different interests and different views, but we were allies. Poland was situated in a part of Europe where a policy was being pursued without consideration for our interests, and often against them. This policy was one of the reasons for the present situation, and that too should be taken into consideration.

I believed that the French Government would duly appreciate the Polish Foreign Minister's declaration of readiness to discuss all problems involved in the developing situation.

To this statement of mine M. Bonnet reacted very animatedly and even, I would say, cordially, and declared that the French Government desired to establish the closest contact with us, that it set high value on such contact, and that he would like to see me more often so as to have the opportunity to discuss every phase of the swiftly developing events. I replied that I would

always be at his service, and that as soon as I had anything useful to impart I would share it with him on my own initiative. This ended our conversation, which lasted 1 h. 15 m. and was of a friendly character, in spite of certain ticklish moments.

I ought to add that in the course of the conversation M. Bonnet said that France had the support not only of England, but also of the United States. I presume he had in mind the statement of Under Secretary of State Sumner Welles published in today's dispatches, which the French press interprets as proof that the sympathies of the Americans are on the side of France, Britain and Czechoslovakia.

I am quite certain that until yesterday evening nothing else had come from Washington. Ambassador Bullitt told me that M. Bonnet had said in a talk with him that he did not entertain the thought that the United States might support the British and French démarche in Berlin, to which Ambassador Bullitt replied that he was definitely right. This confirms how little M. Bonnet needs to assert that a particular State is on the side of France.

Ambassador of the Polish Republic

No. 12

REPORT OF THE GERMAN AMBASSADOR IN LONDON VON DIRKSEN TO THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS¹

Confidential
POLITICAL REPORT²

London, July 10, 1938
FO, Berlin

Supplementary to Report
A. No. 2589, of June 10, 1938

Re: Present State of German-English
Relations

I. There has scarcely been another instance in the history of Anglo-German relations when they have in so short a time been so thoroughly discussed—I would almost say: upset—in their totality as in the past three months. The political relations were put to a severe test by the Austrian

Anschluss and the Czechoslovak crisis; the problem of Austria's debts raised the question of the economic and financial relations of the two countries; England's denunciation of the passport agreement threatened passenger traffic and, hence, the possibility of a proper rapprochement; the British Government's military and economic war preparations—especially the organization of air defence—raised in the minds of the population the spectre of an impending war; the reincorporation of Austria and the "Niemöller affair" reawakened half-forgotten agitational complexes, such as the Jewish question and the Church question. The foundations on which Anglo-German relations were erected tottered; they were threatened by blows from without—for the first time since the end of the world war,

¹ Document from the Archives of the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

² The original bears an inscription in red pencil: "From Ambassador von Dirksen. 18/8."—Ed.

it was not a German-French, but a German-English conflict (it goes without saying, with the participation of France, Czechoslovakia, etc.) which came under the lurid limelight of the world press. These peace-menacing developments took their course notwithstanding the fact that Germany, even on the admission of her enemies, had not committed any act that might constitute a threat to peace, and notwithstanding the fact that in England the Chamberlain-Halifax Cabinet is at the helm and the first and most essential plank of its platform was and is agreement with the totalitarian States.

Hence it is an urgent necessity to analyze the causes that have called forth these developments and to find the means of eliminating this menacing state of affairs.

II. The chief reasons for the developments which are driving toward a crisis in German-English relations are, in my opinion, the following:

1) **The three driving forces that are anxious to unleash a war by a world coalition against Germany¹** in order to destroy her before she has fully established her position as a World Power—Jewry, the Communist International and the nationalist groups in the individual countries—have not for a long time been so persistently and feverishly active as in these past months. After a series of vain attempts to unleash a world war—such as the bombing of the cruiser "Leipzig," the spread of sensational rumours regarding German intentions in Morocco, the attempt of the second Blum Cabinet in March of this year to employ French regular divisions in Spain—these same forces renewed the attempt to set a world coalition against Germany by staging the Czech week-end crisis. This action was prepared, accompanied and, after the failure of the conspiracy, continued by a campaign in the press, for which the revival of the Jewish question in Austria and the Church conflict in Germany were to furnish the fuel.

2) These sinister machinations found fertile soil in British public opinion all the more since the **Austrian Anschluss²** had shocked the political conscience of the Britons. The old catchwords about the right of existence of small nations, democracy, the League of

Nations, the mailed fist of militarism were revived, and profoundly agitated and disturbed the average Englishman who readily responds to every appeal to his sentimentality. Of far greater importance still was the fact that the politically minded Englishman imagined that he had been tactically outwitted and that his power on the continent was threatened. Together with the purely human reaction, "not to be fooled again," the political determination was strengthened to oppose, even at the cost of war, any further attempts to change the balance of power on the continent without a preliminary understanding with England. This determination was for the first time openly expressed during the Czech crisis.

3) To this general attitude of English public opinion was added the state of mind which, in a democratic country, is inseparably associated with rearmament. If opposition was to be removed, the credits for armament obtained, and the necessary number of volunteers for the army and air defence secured, the people had to be roused. To achieve this, it was not enough to persuade the public that there was a theoretical danger of war; it had to be demonstrated that there was a threat from a concrete enemy. All these considerations and tendencies resulted in the creation of an atmosphere which engendered a neurotic fear of a possible attack by a possible enemy. And this possible enemy could only be Germany.

4) These developments were accelerated by the fact that the **whole complex of German-English relations was being more and more drawn into the vortex of British domestic politics.³** By making his major aim the achievement of an adjustment with the authoritarian States independently of the League of Nations, and using this cry to get rid of Eden, Chamberlain—after the conclusion of the Italo-English treaty—gave his opponents the opportunity to select the German-English adjustment, or, rather, its impossibility, as the chief and nearest target for attack. For the non-eventuation of this adjustment would reduce Chamberlain's major thesis to an absurdity. Consequently, the attacks of the British press on the alleged rape of Austria and on Germany's intention to annex Czechia at the same time brought grist to the mill of Chamberlain's foes.

¹ Underscored in the original.—Ed.

² Underscored in the original.—Ed.

³ Underscored in the original.—Ed.

These foes chose German-English relations as a target for direct and indirect attack also from the following considerations of domestic political tactics: the parliamentary opposition—the Labour Party and the Liberals—as a result of a rather complicated evolution, were led to select as the ground for their attacks, not domestic, but foreign policy. Here Germany was an object all ready at hand on which they could vent their hatred of authoritarian state leadership. The same, if for quite different reasons, is true of Chamberlain's enemies within his own party: Eden and the Churchill group. Eden and his followers, because they believe that the authoritarian States can be curbed only by direct threat of war, are following the leading strings of the parliamentary opposition. Churchill, together with his followers, believes that the easiest way to overthrow Chamberlain and put himself in the saddle is to accuse the Cabinet of dilatoriness in building sound defences against possible attack—on the part of Germany, of course. It goes without saying that it is presumed that this attack will come from the air—regarding the threat of which the average Englishman is just now as sensitive as he was regarding the "German Luxusflotte" before the war. Chamberlain had therefore to save himself from the attacks of the opposition by kicking out his Air Ministers, Winterton and Swinton; hence, too, the attack of Member of Parliament Sandys in connection with the insufficiency of anti-aircraft guns. The effect of all these manoeuvres, which for the most part are prompted by purely domestic political considerations, is that the average Englishman pictures Germany as the probable enemy, and one who will perhaps have to be fought soon.

The result of this internal and external development of German-English relations is that the relations between the two countries are in a state of complete uncertainty. The attempts to effect an adjustment made in the talks held from the autumn of 1937 to 1938 were interrupted owing to Chamberlain's declaration on March 23 of this year in connection with the Austrian Anschluss. Of the two pillars on which, even in critical times, the shaky edifice of foreign relations rested—the economic treaty and the naval limitation agreement—the economic treaty was shaken by the question of

Austria's debts; the new agreement, however, was made effective, and it has had a favourable indirect general influence. The naval agreement is liable to alteration owing to the development of the naval armament policy of the Great Powers; its political value has been undermined by the consciousness that has been spreading in England in the past few years, and especially in the past few months, that the most dangerous threat to England's security is now, not the navy of an eventual enemy, but the air force. No long arguments are needed to demonstrate that a general regulation of German-English relations must be striven for, if developments fraught with a serious danger of war are to be averted.

III. The premises for the possibility of a general settlement of the problems which divide the two countries are indicated in the following questions:

1) Have the developments of these past months diminished or destroyed the readiness of the Chamberlain Cabinet to seek an adjustment with Germany?

2) Is the Chamberlain Cabinet strong enough to carry through a policy of adjustment?

In reference to the first question. The shock of the Austrian Anschluss caused the reaction with which we are familiar, but it was comparatively quickly overcome. The blunders of British foreign policy during the Czech week-end crisis were soon recognized as such, and steps were taken to remedy them by acknowledging the loyalty demonstrated by Germany, by remaining silent in face of the vigorous attacks of the German press, by a speech by Halifax friendly to Germany in the House of Lords, by his speech before the Royal Institute of International Affairs containing a broad recognition of the German standpoint, by Chamberlain's speech in Kettering, and by Halifax's statements to the press on July 11.¹

All these pronouncements on the part of responsible British statesmen, which were emphasized and interpreted in conversations with me, are evidence that the desire for agreement with Germany stands—with a growing tendency, however, to let Germany take the initiative for the resumption of the negotiations. In point of time, this readiness coincides with a certain clarification of the Czechoslovak question.

¹ So in the original.—Ed.

There is a wish in London to remove this question, as a breeding ground of a new world war, from the immediate field of danger, if only through a temporary and tentative agreement between the Sudeten Germans and the Czechoslovak Government, before entering on so far-reaching a new political undertaking as an attempt at an adjustment with Germany.

In reference to the second question. The Chamberlain Cabinet has in these past months been the object of a growingly fierce attack on the part of its opponents, without its having any correspondingly conspicuous achievements to show. The only big achievement, the settlement with Ireland, is totally ignored. The Anglo-Italian treaty has not yet entered into force, since the stipulations relative to the developments in Spain have not been carried out. The acceptance of the combining plan¹ likewise cannot be represented as an achievement, since its execution is dubious and at the best will take several months. Relations with Germany, which is being increasingly suspected and abused by the opposition and the press, have been subjected to strain, so that still less could there be any question of adjustment. Chamberlain's foreign policy program of agreement with the totalitarian States has in no case been fully successful—at best it has promissory notes of dubious negotiability to its credit. On the other hand, the Cabinet has sustained painful wounds from the attacks of the opposition: Air Ministers Winterton and Swinton had to be thrown overboard in order to absolve the Cabinet of the charge of displaying insufficient energy in air armament; the Sandys-Hore Belisha conflict over the violation of military secrecy, or parliamentary privileges, is at present at best a draw; Chamberlain's statements regarding England's agricultural potentialities and limitations have incurred the rancour of the British farmers, who represent the core of the Conservative vote. However, in spite of all these attacks, it is unlikely that the Cabinet will be in serious danger before the summer recess. The vacation months, if there are no dangerous developments in foreign policy, will have an assuaging effect. The confidence in Chamberlain's personal inte-

grity and firmness prevalent in wide sections of the electorate will be reinforced by the recognition that there is no other man in the opposition equal to him. The desire to reach an adjustment with Germany exists among the broad mass of the British people and is popular.

After a few months of more tranquil developments Chamberlain and Halifax will have the determination, and the assurance from the standpoint of domestic politics, to tackle the last and most important task of British policy: an adjustment with Germany.

IV. To sum up, it may be said:

1) German-English relations, in their totality, are uncertain and extremely strained. They are in need of adjustment—or at least of an attempt at adjustment—if it is to be avoided that, as was the case before 1914, the conviction gain ground with the British Government (present or future) that the defeat of Germany by a world coalition is essential for the security of the British Empire.

2) The present British Cabinet is the first post-war Cabinet which has made agreement with Germany one of the major points of its program; therefore this government displays with regard to Germany the maximum understanding that could be displayed by any of the likely combinations of British politicians. It possesses the inner-political strength to carry out this task. It has come nearer to understanding the most essential points of the major demands advanced by Germany, with respect to excluding the Soviet Union from the decision of the destinies of Europe, the League of Nations likewise, and the advisability of bilateral negotiations and treaties. It is displaying increasing understanding of Germany's demands in the Sudeten German question. It would be prepared to make great sacrifices to meet Germany's other just demands—on the one² condition that it is endeavoured to achieve these ends by peaceful means. If Germany should resort to military means to achieve these ends, England would without the slightest doubt go to war on the side of France. The military preparations are sufficiently advanced for this; so are the war-economic preparations; the mental preparation of the English people for such an eventuality, as the last few months have shown, has been com-

¹ The plan to eliminate foreign volunteers from the Republican army and so-called "volunteers" from Franco's army.—Ed.

² Underscored in the original.—Ed.

pleted; the political trial mobilization during the Czech crisis showed that the foreign political deployment¹ has been effected on a scale at least as great as the world coalition of 1914.

¹ In the original: "aussenpolitischer Aufmarsch."
—Ed.

3) The attempt to effect an adjustment with England will therefore be the most urgent task of our foreign policy, as soon as suitable conditions will have been created for it in the course of the next few months.

Signed: *von Dirksen*

No. 34

COMMUNICATION OF THE GERMAN DELEGATION IN MUNICH TO THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS ON THE COURSE OF THE MUNICH CONFERENCE¹

Confidential

Munich, September 29, 1938
19 h. 00 m.

For the Under Secretary of State
in the Foreign Office, Berlin

To be delivered by special messenger!

Immediately! Immediately!

The Under Secretary of State to acknowledge receipt

Strictly confidential!

The Führer opened the conference at 12:45 and expressed his thanks to the attending Heads of Governments for having accepted his invitation to Munich. He added that he wanted first of all to give a brief outline of the Czech question as it stood at the present moment. The existence of Czechoslovakia in its present form was threatening European peace. The German, Hungarian, Slovak, Polish and Carpatho-Russian minorities, who were forced into this State against their will, revolted against its continued existence. He, the Führer, could only speak for the German minority.

In the interest of peace in Europe this problem must be solved without the slightest delay, namely, by the fulfilment of the promise given by the Czech Government to transfer [the territory]. Germany could not stand by and watch the misery and poverty of the Sudeten German population any longer. Reports of the destruction of property

were coming in in increasing number. The population was being barbarously persecuted. Since he, the Führer, had last spoken with Mr. Chamberlain, the number of refugees had risen to 240,000, and there seemed to be no end to the flow. Furthermore, it was necessary to put an end to the political, military and economic tension, which was unbearable. This tension demanded that the problem should be settled within a few days, for it was no longer possible to wait weeks. At the request of the Head of the Italian Government, he, the Führer, had expressed his willingness to postpone mobilization in Germany for twenty-four hours. Further procrastination would be criminal. The responsible statesmen of Europe had gathered here to settle the problem, and he noted that the differences were minimal, because, first, all were agreed that the territory must be ceded to Germany, and, second, that Germany claimed nothing more than this territory. It could not be left to a commission to make an exact definition of the territory in question. This required a plebiscite, all the more so since free elections had not been held in Czechoslovakia for twenty years. He had declared in his speech in the Sportpalast that on the first of October he would march in² (einmarschieren werde) whatever happened. To this it was replied that such procedure would bear the character of an act of violence. The task, consequently, was to deprive the act of this character. Action, however, must be taken immediately, first, because the persecutions could no longer be

¹ Document from the Archives of the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

² To Czechoslovakia.—Ed.

contemplated with indifference, and also because, in view of the vacillations in Prague, further delay could not be tolerated. From the military standpoint, the occupation presented no problem, since the depth to be penetrated was on all sides small. Given the desire, therefore, it would be possible to evacuate the territory in ten days, even, he was convinced, in six or seven days. In deference to British and French public opinion, he would leave the question open whether German troops should also march into the territory where the plebiscite is to be held. But in that case there must be a position of parity, the Czechs must do the same. The modus of the transfer could be discussed, but action must be taken quickly. That armed Powers should stand facing each other in Europe, as they were now, could not be tolerated for long.

Prime Minister Chamberlain began by thanking the Führer for the invitation to the conference. He also thanked the Duce, to whose initiative, if he understood correctly, today's conference was due. This conference gave Europe a new respite, whereas yesterday catastrophe seemed imminent. He quite agreed that swift action must be taken, and he especially welcomed the Führer's statement that he did not want to resort to force, but to establish order. If the problem were approached in this spirit, he was certain that results would be achieved.

The Head of the Italian Government said that they all were already agreed in theory, and the thing now was to translate theory into practice. The time factor was particularly important. Every delay was a source of danger. He particularly insisted on expeditious action, because here expedition accorded with justice. It would be better to come to an agreement this very day, for a delay of even twenty-four hours would cause new uneasiness and new suspicion. By way of a practical solution of the problem, he would like to make the following proposal (see Enclosure 1).¹

French Prime Minister Daladier likewise thanked the Führer for his initiative. He was glad to have the opportunity to meet him personally. There had been plans for such a meeting before, but circumstances had unfortunately prevented it until now. But, as the French proverb said, better late than never.

Prime Minister Daladier then addressed the Duce and expressed his especial admiration at his step, which, it was to be hoped, would lead to a solution of the problem. Like Mr. Chamberlain, he was of the opinion that action must be taken with the greatest speed. He particularly welcomed the objectivity and realism of the Duce's proposal, which he accepted as a basis for discussion. This of course did not mean that he agreed to all points, since the economic aspects ought to be taken into account, in order not to create a soil for future wars. Lastly, there was the question of the organization of the plebiscite and the delimitation of the zone. He mentioned these points only because he had not yet studied the proposal just read. But he could accept it right away as a basis for discussion.

Prime Minister Chamberlain likewise welcomed the Duce's proposal and declared that he himself had pictured the solution along the same lines. As to the guarantee which was being asked of Britain, he would be glad if a representative of the Czech Government were present. For England could naturally not give any guarantee that the territory would be evacuated by October 10 and that no destruction would take place, unless an assurance were given to this effect by the Czech Government.

The Führer replied to this that he was not interested in assurances from the Czech Government, for it was precisely this government that was doing the destruction. The question was how the Czech Government could be made to accept the proposal. There was unanimity that the territory was to be ceded to Germany. The Czechs, however, declared that they could not evacuate it until new fortifications had been built and economic decisions taken.

Prime Minister Daladier said that the French Government would under no circumstances tolerate dilatory conduct on the part of the Czech Government. The Czech Government had given its word, and it must keep it. There could be no question of postponing the evacuation of the territory until new fortifications had been built. He requested this idea to be excluded from the discussion altogether, since the Czech Government would receive a guarantee in return for its concessions. Nevertheless, like Mr. Chamberlain, he was of the opinion that the presence of a Czech representative who

¹ The enclosure is missing from the file.—Ed.

could be consulted if necessary would be useful. It seemed to him useful, above all else, in order to avert disorders, which in so delicate a matter as the cession of territory might easily arise. Everything should be done to avoid chaos.

To this the Führer replied that if the Czech Government was to be asked for its consent to every detail, a settlement could not be expected before fourteen days. The Duce's proposal envisaged the setting up of a commission which would include a representative of the Czech Government. What he was interested in above all was a guarantee from the Great Powers, who must use their authority to make the Czech Government stop the persecution and destruction.

Prime Minister Chamberlain said that he too did not think the matter should be delayed any longer. But before he could give a guarantee he had to know whether he could honour it, and he would therefore welcome it if a representative of the Prague Government were present in the next room from whom he could receive assurances.

The Führer replied that there was no Czech representative with authority to speak for his government here at the moment. What he was interested in knowing was what would happen if the Czech Government did not accept the proposal of the Great Powers. Two hundred and forty-seven bridges and an even greater number of houses had already been destroyed.

The Italian Prime Minister said that he likewise did not think they could wait for a Czech representative. The Great Powers must assume a moral guarantee for the evacuation and for the prevention of destruction. They must tell Prague that the Czech Government must accept the demands, otherwise it must bear the military consequences. What was needed was a request by the Great Powers, whose moral duty it was that this territory shall not be a wilderness when it is turned over.

Prime Minister Chamberlain replied that he would very much like to have a Czech representative present. For the rest, the time limits proposed by the Duce seemed to him quite reasonable. He was prepared to subscribe to them, and to inform the Czech Government that it ought to accept them. But he could not give any guarantee until

he knew how he could honour it. Besides, there were still a few points that had to be cleared up. What would be the powers of the international commission, and what regime would prevail in the territory after it had been evacuated? He had no doubt that the Führer would see that order was maintained and also take care that those inhabitants who were opposed to the Anschluss would not be persecuted. But there were certain points in the German memorandum which were not understood in England. It was asked, for instance, what was the meaning of the condition that no cattle were to be removed from this territory. Did it mean that the farmers would be deported, but that their cattle would remain?

The Führer replied that it went without saying that German law would operate in the territory to be ceded to Germany. At present, however, the very opposite was the case: the Czechs were carrying off the cattle of the German farmers. The decisive thing it seemed to him was: was the question regarded as a German-Czech conflict which would be settled in fourteen days, or as a problem of European significance. If it was a European problem, then the Great Powers must throw their authority into the scales and assume responsibility for seeing to it that the transfer was carried out properly. If the Czech Government did not accept these proposals, it would be clear that the greatest moral authority, which in general must exist, namely the authority embodied in the signatures of the four statesmen here assembled, was not sufficient. In that case the question could be settled only by resort to force.

Prime Minister Chamberlain said that he had no objections to raise to the proposed time limits. The Czech question was a European question, and the Great Powers had not only the right, but the duty to settle it. They also had to see to it that the Czech Government did not refuse, out of perverseness or obstinacy, to evacuate the territory. He wanted the authority of the Great Powers to be applied properly, and he therefore suggested that the Duce's plan should first be distributed and the meeting adjourned for a short while in order that the plan might be studied. This would involve no delay.

Prime Minister Daladier said that he had

already taken upon himself the responsibility in London, when, without asking the Czech Government, he had given his consent in principle to the cession of the German areas. He had taken this stand even though France had a treaty of alliance with Czechoslovakia. If it should be difficult to secure the participation of a representative of Prague, he was prepared not to insist

upon it, since the important thing was to have the question settled quickly.

To this the Führer replied that if a document bearing the signatures of the four statesmen were rejected by the Prague Government, this would mean that Prague in the end only respected force.

Received: *Heinisch*

No. 35

TEXT OF MUNICH AGREEMENT¹

AGREEMENT BETWEEN GERMANY, THE UNITED KINGDOM, FRANCE AND ITALY CONCLUDED AT MUNICH ON SEPTEMBER 29, 1938

Germany, the United Kingdom, France and Italy, taking into consideration the agreement which has been already reached in principle for the cession to Germany of the Sudeten German territory, have agreed on the following terms and conditions governing the said cession and the measures consequent thereon, and by this agreement they each hold themselves responsible for the steps necessary to secure its fulfilment—

1. The evacuation will begin on the 1st October.

2. The United Kingdom, France and Italy agree that the evacuation of the territory shall be completed by the 10th October, without any existing installations having been destroyed and that the Czechoslovak Government will be held responsible for carrying out the evacuation without damage to the said installations.

3. The conditions governing the evacuation will be laid down in detail by an international commission composed of representatives of Germany, the United Kingdom, France, Italy and Czechoslovakia.

4. The occupation by stages of the predominantly German territory by German troops will begin on the 1st October. The four territories marked on the attached map will be occupied by German troops in the following order: The territory marked No. I on the 1st and 2nd of October, the territory

marked No. II on the 2nd and 3rd of October, the territory marked No. III on the 3rd, 4th and 5th of October, the territory marked No. IV on the 6th and 7th of October. The remaining territory of preponderantly German character will be ascertained by the aforesaid international commission forthwith and be occupied by German troops by the 10th of October.

5. The international commission referred to in paragraph 3 will determine the territories in which a plebiscite is to be held. These territories will be occupied by international bodies until the plebiscite has been completed. The same commission will fix the conditions in which the plebiscite is to be held, taking as a basis the conditions of the Saar plebiscite. The commission will also fix a date, not later than the end of November, on which the plebiscite will be held.

6. The final determination of the frontiers will be carried out by the international commission. This commission will also be entitled to recommend to the four Powers—Germany, the United Kingdom, France and Italy—in certain exceptional cases minor modifications in the strictly ethnographical determination of the zones which are to be transferred without plebiscite.

7. There will be a right of option into and out of the transferred territories, the option to be exercised within six months from the date of this agreement. A German-Czechoslovak commission shall determine the details of the option, consider ways of facilitating the transfer of population and settle questions of principle arising out of the said transfer.

¹ Published in "Further Documents Respecting Czechoslovakia," Miscellaneous No. 8, 1938, Cmd. 5848.—Ed.

8. The Czechoslovak Government will within a period of four weeks from the date of this agreement release from their military and police forces any Sudeten Germans who may wish to be released, and the Czechoslovak Government will within the same period release Sudeten German prisoners who are serving terms of imprisonment for political offences.

Adolf Hitler
Neville Chamberlain
Edouard Daladier
Benito Mussolini

Munich, September 29, 1938

ANNEX TO THE AGREEMENT

His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom and the French Government have entered into the above agreement on the basis that they stand by the offer, contained in paragraph 6 of the Anglo-French proposals of the 19th September, relating to an international guarantee of the new boundaries of the Czechoslovak State against unprovoked aggression.

When the question of the Polish and Hungarian minorities in Czechoslovakia has been settled, Germany and Italy for their part will give a guarantee to Czechoslovakia.

(Same signatures)

Munich, September 29, 1938

COMPOSITION OF THE INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION

The four Heads of Government here present agree that the international commission provided for in the agreement signed by them today shall consist of the Secretary of State in the German Foreign Office, the British, French and Italian Ambassadors accredited in Berlin, and a representative to be nominated by the Government of Czechoslovakia.

(Same signatures)

Munich, September 29, 1938

SUPPLEMENTARY DECLARATION

All questions which may arise out of the transfer of the territory shall be considered as coming within the terms of reference to the international commission.

(Same signatures)

Munich, September 29, 1938

DECLARATION

The Heads of the Governments of the four Powers declare that the problems of the Polish and Hungarian minorities in Czechoslovakia, if not settled within three months by agreement between the respective Governments, shall form the subject of another meeting of the Heads of the Governments of the four Powers here present.

(Same signatures)

Munich, September 29, 1938

No. 36

KORDT'S NOTES ON THE MUNICH CONFERENCE¹

Copy
Confidential

NOTES ON THE MUNICH CONFERENCE

4 h. 30 m., September 29, 1938

On the recommendation of the Duce it was first decided to discuss the Italian proposal submitted to the delegations in the morning point by point. Point 1 (the evac-

uation to begin on October 1) was accepted unanimously.

On point 2 the Führer said that if agreement could also be reached on this point, the question of the modus of the evacuation would not give rise to big difficulties. His proposal was that first the definite stages of the German occupation should be marked on the map; the modus could then be determined by a commission, which would include a Czech representative.

Prime Minister Chamberlain said that he agreed with the time limit laid down in

¹ Document from the Archives of the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

point 2, October 10, for the completion of the evacuation of the German territory. He, however, expressed doubt whether he could give Germany a guarantee so long as he did not know what the attitude of Czechoslovakia was to the question of evacuation.

On the question whether it was necessary to request the consent of Czechoslovakia before giving the guarantee envisaged in the Italian proposal, as Mr. Chamberlain seemed to wish, Daladier said that he did not think such consent was necessary. He, when in England,¹ had consented in principle to the cession of the territory by Czechoslovakia, without first inquiring of the Czechoslovak Government, in spite of the existence of the Franco-Czech pact, and his opinion now was that once the promise had been given, it should be kept. Daladier also rejected, in view of the Anglo-French guarantee, the Czechoslovak objection, mentioned in the course of the discussion, that the evacuation could take place only when the erection of new fortifications on Czech territory had been completed. The evacuation of the purely German area could therefore be effected quickly; difficulties would only arise where there were enclaves. In these districts, it seemed to him, international occupation by British, Italian and French troops would be expedient. In addition, it was necessary, in his opinion, as a supplement to the Wilsonian principle of self-determination, to take geographical, economic and political realities into account. Furthermore, in the case of the enclaves, the principle of exchange of populations practiced in Greece, Turkey, Bulgaria and Poland could also be applied.

The Führer said he agreed that districts with disputable majorities should not be occupied by German troops, but should be first occupied by international military units. If point 2 were accepted, he was prepared to be generous with regard to the delimitation of the territory. The theory advanced by M. Daladier that economic, geographical and political factors must be taken into account when defining the frontiers seemed to him dangerous, because it was precisely to this theory that the Czechoslovak State owed its origin in 1918. At that time an entity was created which was viable economically, but not viable nationally. Moreover,

economic difficulties could more easily be settled than national difficulties, all the more that Czechoslovakia, not being a nation with an old culture, could not assimilate the German population.

After a lengthy discussion of the different meanings of the word "guarantee" in England and on the continent, the point was referred to a drafting committee for reformulation. This committee, after long deliberation, drew up the preamble contained in the text of the treaty, and reformulated point 2.

From this moment on the conference dissolved into individual discussions, dealing in particular, with the help of maps, with the zones due to be evacuated and the districts where the plebiscite is to be held. In the course of these discussions Daladier suggested the exchange of a large zone with a predominantly German population on the Silesian border, in which there were Czech fortifications, for a corresponding Czech strip of land in the Bohemian Forest, remarking that the presence of Czech fortifications was not the sole reason for the suggestion, but that he also had political and psychological considerations in mind.

The Führer declined this suggestion in view of the purely German character of the area in question, but after long negotiations agreed to accept the formula embodied in the treaty regarding modifications of the frontiers (see point 6 of the Munich Agreement).

Daladier expressed his warm thanks to the Führer for this, and declared that the adoption of this formula would make his position in France much easier. On returning to France he would say that the Führer made this personal gesture to him (Daladier).

The agreements reached in the individual discussions of the statesmen were then finally formulated by a four-power drafting committee, with the assistance of the legal advisers of the delegations, and were given a first reading at about ten o'clock in the evening. The final text of the treaty was ready by about eleven o'clock, and between eleven and twelve o'clock it was signed in four languages. At the same time the conference adopted a supplementary declaration on the settlement of the problem of the Polish and Magyar minorities on the basis of a proposal made by Mussolini; a supplement-

¹ The original has "an England," which is an obvious misprint.—Ed.

ary agreement concerning a guarantee to be given for the new frontiers of the Czech State; a supplementary declaration to the effect that all questions arising in connection with the transfer of territory came within the terms of reference to the international commission which was to be set up; and another supplementary declaration on the composition of the international commission in Berlin.

In conclusion, the Führer thanked the foreign statesmen for having accepted his invitation to the four-power conference in Munich and for their efforts for the happy outcome of the negotiations. Both the

German people and the other peoples concerned would hail this outcome with the greatest joy, and in expressing his thanks he also did so in the name of the German people.

Chamberlain replied on behalf of the foreign statesmen and associated himself with the Führer's conviction that the Munich decision would be greeted with satisfaction by the nations concerned. He also stressed the importance of the agreement for the future course of European policy.

Signed: *Erich Kordt*

No. 37

A CZECHOSLOVAK FOREIGN MINISTRY RECORD OF THE CZECHOSLOVAK DELEGATION'S VISIT TO MUNICH¹

MADE IN MUNICH, BY DR. HUBERT MASAŘÍK,
AT 4 A.M., SEPTEMBER 30, 1938

At 3 p.m. on September 29, 1938, our airplane took off from Ruzyn. After eighty minutes' flight we landed at Munich. The reception we met with at the airdrome was roughly that accorded to police suspects. We were taken in a police car, accompanied by members of the Gestapo, to the Hotel Regina, where the British Delegation was also staying. The Conference was already in progress and it was difficult to establish any contact with leading members either of the British or French delegations. Nevertheless I called out by telephone first Mr. Rochat and then Mr. Ashton-Gwatkin. The latter told me he wished to speak to me immediately in the Hotel.

At 7 p.m. I had my first conversation with Mr. Ashton-Gwatkin. He was nervous and very reserved. From certain cautious remarks, I gathered that a plan, the details of which Mr. Gwatkin could not then give me, was already completed in its main outlines and that it was much harsher than the Anglo-French proposals. On our red map, I explained to him all our really vital interests. Mr. Gwatkin showed a certain understanding in the question of the Moravian

corridor, though he completely ignored all the other elements of the problem.

According to him, the Conference should end at the latest tomorrow, Saturday. Up to now, only Czechoslovakia had been discussed. I drew Mr. Gwatkin's attention to the consequences of such a plan from the internal political, economic and financial aspect. He answered that I did not seem to realize how difficult the situation was for the Western Powers or how awkward it was to negotiate with Hitler. On which, Mr. Gwatkin returned to the Conference, promising that we should be called at the first interval.

At 10 p.m. Mr. Gwatkin took Dr. Mastny and myself to Sir Horace Wilson. There, in the presence of Mr. Gwatkin and at the express wish of Mr. Chamberlain, Sir Horace told us the main lines of the new plan and handed us a map on which were marked the areas which were to be occupied at once. To my objections, he replied twice with absolute formality that he had nothing to add to his statements. He paid no attention whatever to what we said concerning places and areas of the greatest importance to us. Finally, he returned to the Conference and we remained alone with Mr. Gwatkin. We did what we could to convince him of the necessity of revising the plan. His most important reply was that made to M. Mastny, to the effect that the

¹ Published in Dr. Hubert Ripka's *Munich: Before and After*, London, 1939, pp. 224-227.—Ed.

British Delegation favoured the new German plan.

When he again began to speak of the difficulties of negotiating with Hitler, I said that, in fact, everything depended on the firmness of the two Western Great Powers. To which Mr. Gwatkin answered in a very serious tone: "If you do not accept, you will have to settle your affairs all alone with the Germans. Perhaps the French will put it more amiably, but I assure you that they share our views. They will disinterest themselves...."

At 1:30 a.m. we were taken into the hall where the Conference had been held. There were present Mr. Neville Chamberlain, M. Daladier, Sir Horace Wilson, M. Léger, Mr. Ashton-Gwatkin, Dr. Mastny and myself. The atmosphere was oppressive; sentence was about to be passed. The French, obviously embarrassed, appeared to be aware of the consequences for French prestige. Mr. Chamberlain, in a short introduction, referred to the agreement which had just been concluded and gave the text to Dr. Mastny to read out. During the reading of the text, we asked the precise meaning of certain passages. Thus, for example, I asked MM. Léger and Wilson to be so kind as to explain the words "preponderantly German character" in Article 4. M. Léger, without mentioning a percentage, merely remarked that it was a question of majorities calculated according to the proposals we had already accepted. Mr. Chamberlain also confirmed that there was no question except of applying a plan which we had already accepted. When we came to Article 6, I asked M. Léger whether we were to consider it as a clause assuring the protection of our vital interests as had been promised in the original proposals. M. Léger said, "Yes," but that it was only possible to a very moderate degree, and that the question would come under the International Commission. Dr. Mastny asked Mr. Chamberlain whether the Czechoslovak member

of the commission would have the same right to vote as the other members, to which Mr. Chamberlain agreed. In answer to the question whether international troops or British forces would be sent to the plebiscite areas, we were told that that was under consideration, but that Italian and Belgian troops might also participate.

While M. Mastny was speaking with Mr. Chamberlain about matters of perhaps secondary importance (Mr. Chamberlain yawned without ceasing and with no show of embarrassment), I asked MM. Daladier and Léger whether they expected a declaration or answer to the agreement from our Government. M. Daladier, obviously embarrassed, did not reply. M. Léger replied that the four statesmen had not much time. He added positively that they no longer expected an answer from us; they regarded the plan as accepted and that our Government had that very day, at latest by 5 p.m. to send its representative to Berlin to the meeting of the International Commission and finally that the Czechoslovak official whom we sent would have to be in Berlin on Saturday, in order to fix the details of the evacuation of the first zone. The atmosphere was becoming oppressive for everyone present.

It had been explained to us in a sufficiently brutal manner, and that by a Frenchman, that this was a sentence without right of appeal and without possibility of modification.

Mr. Chamberlain did not conceal his fatigue. After the text had been read, we were given a second slightly corrected map. We said "Good-bye" and left. The Czechoslovak Republic as fixed by the frontiers of 1918 had ceased to exist. In the hall I met Rochat, who asked me what the reactions would be at home. I replied curtly that I did not exclude the worst and that it was necessary to be prepared for the gravest eventualities.

No. 39

ANGLO-GERMAN DECLARATION¹JOINT DECLARATION BY ADOLF HITLER AND
NEVILLE CHAMBERLAIN

Munich, September 30, 1938

We, the German Führer and Chancellor and the British Prime Minister, have had a further meeting today and are agreed in recognizing that the question of Anglo-German relations is of the first importance for the two countries and for Europe.

We regard the agreement signed last night and the Anglo-German Naval Agreement as symbolic of the desire of our two peoples never to go to war with one another again.

We are resolved that the method of consultation shall be the method adopted to deal with any other questions that may concern our two countries, and we are determined to continue our efforts to remove possible sources of difference and thus to contribute to assure the peace of Europe.

Adolf Hitler
Neville Chamberlain

¹ Published in Times, October 1, 1938, p. 12.—Ed.

No. 42

FRANCO-GERMAN DECLARATION¹

M. Georges Bonnet, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the French Republic, and M. Joachim von Ribbentrop, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the German Reich, acting in the name and by order of their respective Governments, have agreed on the following points at their meeting in Paris on December 6, 1938:

1) The French Government and the German Government fully share the conviction that pacific and neighbourly relations between France and Germany constitute one of the essential elements of the consolidation of the situation in Europe and of the preservation of general peace. Consequently both Governments will endeavour with all their might to assure the development of the relations between their countries in this direction.

2) Both Governments agree that no question of a territorial nature remains in suspense between their countries and solemnly recognize as permanent the frontier between their countries as it is actually drawn.

3) Both Governments are resolved, without prejudice to their special relations with third Powers, to remain in contact on all questions of importance to both their countries and to have recourse to mutual consultation in case any complications arising out of these questions should threaten to lead to international difficulties.

In witness whereof the Representatives of the two Governments have signed the present Declaration, which comes into force immediately.

Executed in duplicate in the French and German languages at Paris, on December 6, 1938.

Signed:

Georges Bonnet
Joachim von Ribbentrop

¹ Published in Ministère des Affaires Etrangères, Documents Diplomatiques 1938-1939, Paris, MDCCCCXXXIX. Doc. No. 28, p. 33.—Ed.

No. 44

LETTER FROM THE POLISH AMBASSADOR IN LONDON RACZYNSKI TO THE POLISH AMBASSADOR IN BERLIN LIPSKI¹

AMBASSADOR OF THE
POLISH REPUBLIC²

London, December 19, 1938

Ambassador Jozef Lipski,
Berlin

Dear Jozef,

I take the liberty to enclose herewith a copy of a letter I sent to the Foreign Minister on the 16th inst.

I take advantage of the opportunity to convey my best wishes and heartiest congratulations on the occasion of the New Year.³

Yours,

Edward Raczyński

1 enclosure

ENCLOSURE

EMBASSY OF THE POLISH
REPUBLIC IN LONDON

London, December 16, 1938

No. 1/WB/257/tj/

Confidential

The Minister of Foreign Affairs,
Warsaw

Highly Esteemed Mr. Minister,

In view of the very abrupt changes that have taken place in the international situation and the reaction of certain States to these changes, to form any general conclusions is at the present moment a risky and thankless undertaking. Nevertheless, I consider it my duty to make the attempt, with the object, Mr. Minister, of giving you a picture of the situation as one sees it from this local observation post. The only risk I take is that the picture, observed from a different angle, may seem tendentious, or one-sided, or even plainly biased or banal.

The post-Munich situation is assessed here as a state of neither war nor peace. Premier Chamberlain's statement regard-

ing the advent of a new era guaranteeing peace to "our generation" is considered by all to be an illusion, which contact with reality is causing swiftly to fade away. It must be admitted that Mr. Chamberlain is adhering very stubbornly and consistently to his chosen course, which is to lead to a four-power pact and the realization of the projects for a "new order in Europe," based in one form or another on this pact. He continues to believe (honestly, I am assured) in the effectiveness of the method of personal contact between the responsible leaders of the partner States in the combination he has chosen, and it is with this belief that he is preparing for his next visit to Rome.

However, it is more than obvious that what is most attractive to the Englishman—"organization of Europe"—is not to the liking of Berlin, and that the realization of the rest of the Premier's program is proceeding very haltingly. So far the reply to his "active peace policy" has been three rude speeches by Hitler, the accentuation of the anti-Jewish course, as well as a new program of Italian claims supported by Berlin.

One would think that, in view of such numerous disappointments, Mr. Chamberlain should be encountering increasing dissatisfaction and opposition not only in Parliament (where the opposition, thanks to party discipline, would not be so very effective), but above all among the British public. There is opposition, but, mirabile dictu, it apparently shows no signs of growth since Munich. I hear less about the likelihood of a Labour Party comeback than I did a year ago. True, from time to time there is talk of the formation of a real "National Government," to include both oppositions, but so far there is no certainty of it.

For all this there are various reasons, of which two seem to me the most important.

First: **The general opinion is that "Munich" was the most correct, if not the only, way out of a desperate situation.**⁴

I recently heard some characteristic remarks from a high official in the Foreign Office, who is known for his critical attitude

¹ Original in Polish.

² Letterhead.

³ The second paragraph and the signature are in Raczyński's own hand.—Ed.

⁴ Underscored in the original.—Ed.

toward the Premier's policy. This gentleman agreed with the above opinion, only with the reservation that the Premier made a big mistake when he said that peace purchased at such a price was a "peace with honour."¹ For that matter, the Premier himself, I think, regrets this expression, which he used under the stress of deep emotion.

(Furthermore, my informer asserted that the Western States were able to "wriggle out of an extremely difficult situation without war thanks to the decision of the Czechs to capitulate without a fight...²)

Second reason: The conviction that the Premier (to draw a not very exact parallel with the field of sports) blocked the British goal, and thus carried the game into the East of Europe. Whatever happens, the fact remains that time has been gained. And adjournment³ is no less popular in this home of political empiricism than in Geneva.

It is hard for me to learn what the Premier is thinking, and whether he is less naive, or less sincere, than they say he is. But on the other hand I do know, on the basis of long observation, the reaction of the folk here. It is as vital, direct, uniform, almost physiological, as the reaction of ants or bees, and is independent of the phraseology with which public opinion here is regularly fed. Notwithstanding all the declarations of the active elements of the opposition, a conflict in Eastern Europe which threatens in one way or another to embroil Germany and Russia is universally and subconsciously regarded as a "lesser evil" capable of postponing the menace to the Empire and its overseas components for a longer period.⁴

Chamberlain's attitude to the Soviets continues to be cold. The truth is that he is extremely consistent and quite frankly avoids everything that might serve as an excuse to his political partners to decline to collaborate. But the truth also is that the Premier officially avoids doing anything to oppose Germany's designs in the East.

The British public are at last realizing with satisfaction that the Premier's policy does not mean a renunciation of rearma-

ment—on the contrary, thanks to the respite it makes rearmament possible.⁵

As the above remarks will show, Mr. Neville Chamberlain, in spite of the disappointments and even humiliating unpleasantnesses he meets with, continues to remain a "force" in British politics.

On the other hand, he is not only being very strongly criticized by the opposition (who accuse him of being guided not only by national, but also class interests, in the Spanish question for instance), but also by political "experts," and primarily by his own officials.⁶

In those quarters it is now asserted that even if the general lines of his policy are correct (or furnish a good excuse for a respite), his tactics are unfortunate. I might again cite the opinion of two high officials who told me that they are well aware how low the prestige of the Premier has fallen in Germany, where only quite recently he enjoyed great respect.... What his officials want today is not a radical change of the system, but greater persistence at its various stages—that no political or economic positions in Europe should be voluntarily surrendered in the false hope that a more indulgent or yielding attitude will be displayed elsewhere.

Lastly, there is still another important field where opinions differ. This is the question of national defence. Premier Chamberlain has to this day not abandoned the platform of retaining voluntary military service and at the same time pushing the expansion of the navy and the air force, without, however, taking measures to create a land army capable of offensive operations. The Premier's restraint may be explained by his well-known tendency to conciliate the militaristic Axis powers. On the other hand, in view of the approaching elections he has to reckon with the unpopularity of conscription in Britain, especially among the workers. The officials, however, want conscription. It is also ardently desired by the "patriotic" opposition.

Conscription, which probably could only be introduced after the elections, would be the most eloquent evidence that Britain is

¹ The words "peace with honour" are in English in the original.—Ed.

² The inverted commas are not closed in the original.—Ed.

³ The word "adjournment" is in English.—Ed.

⁴ Underscored in the original.—Ed.

⁵ Although still one-sided, of which I shall speak presently.—Raczynski's note.

⁶ This is also indicative of how far the Premier has gone in removing the officials from the making of foreign policy.—Raczynski's note.

passing from an attitude of mild conciliation to increased "firmness."

I may be mistaken, but I am convinced not only that such a turn must take place, but that the beginnings of such a turn are already in evidence. They take the form of changes, so far inconspicuous, in the character of official pronouncements. I also refer to the extension of the system which permits the government to guarantee credits granted by industrialists to foreign clients, and also the first attempt to extend such guarantees to war materials (so far they are confined to the £10,000,000 sanctioned last week by the House of Commons on the motion of the government).

Such is the background against which the attitude of the English toward Poland should be judged. As to the Premier, his friends and his press, there is no doubt that here we are meeting with great reserve.

The post-Munich ice has been broken, personal prejudices are being forgotten; however, a reluctance still prevails to make commitments, especially such as might be given an anti-German construction. The Foreign Office has so far only ventured the following admission, made to me in friendly conversation: "The British Government certainly does not want Poland to withdraw from the balance of power policy pursued till now" (Strang, December 9).

Meanwhile, I must note that for some time there has been something in the nature of an organized campaign among the public and the press here, which takes advantage of information and even gossip presented in too lurid colours, and which endeavours

to represent Polish-German relations in an unfavourable light.¹

This state of affairs gives rise to alarm and pessimistic opinions as to Poland's political position. The above-mentioned "action"—if action is the right word in this case, of which there is no clear evidence—is primarily developing around the problem of Transcarpathian Rus and the Ukrainian demands, but at the same time it is connected with other possible causes of friction, as, for instance, the question of Danzig, and also, quite recently (*Daily Express* and even the *Times*), of Teschen Silesia, from which, through Prague or Moravska Ostrava, serious disturbances were reported in the press.² It is difficult here [in England] to counteract the press, unless you meet with overt misrepresentations of the facts which could be denied (as we are, of course, constantly doing). A more effective method might be to operate with positive facts from Poland which would refute the circulated gossip. It need not be said that such machinations are prejudicial to our political prestige and to Britain's confidence in us, especially just now, when she is only gradually beginning to throw off the fetters of defeatism.

Accept, etc.,

Edward Raczyński

¹ In order to be exact, I must emphasize that Rumania is perhaps the subject of even more alarming comments. Incidentally, the Rumanians here are very uneasy about it.—Raczyński's note.

² This latter gossip is perhaps a counter-measure on the part of Prague in revenge for Transcarpathian Rus.—Raczyński's note.

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